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# WALTER CHIVERS SAYS:

## Invented: A New Negro

BY WALTER R. CHIVERS

NO RECENT commentary on Negroes has struck me as hard a blow between the eyes as the recent feature article in the Birmingham News entitled "Judge Ab Knows Negroes by Heart." One



CHIVERS most likely to be more sympathetically administered when the Negro fits description and definition set forth by the judge of that court. This statement is based upon the following

extracts from the news article.  
"Formerly there was another cause... gaming... but Judge Abernathy declared he put a stop to that by refusing to convict Negroes for gaming."

The other extract reads:  
"He prefers a country Negro because he says the country Negro hasn't forsaken the mocking bird's song for the honky-tonk rockola. But country or city, he likes the Negro, if he is a natural everyday sort of Negro, and he can talk their language and good naturedly mimic them."

### SHOULD BE OF CONCERN

This definition of the type of Negro who has the judge's approval should concern the intelligent, fair-minded citizens of the Magic City regardless of race. I say this because it seems as though this great industrial metropolis is affected by an atmosphere of such a quality until the "pure simple, untainted son of the soil" who settle in Birmingham with full intention of becoming a good citizen is more likely to "forsake the mocking bird's" song for the "honky-tonk rockola." If this is true then white rural migrants are susceptible to the identical crime

breeding magnets. Observation proves that the lure of the rockola is interracial.

Again what is a "natural, every day sort of Negro?" The question is asked in all sincerity. I admit in spite of the number of years I have been a Negro and as widely as I have traveled making professional studies of all classes of Negroes, even in Birmingham, this "new" Negro has completely escaped my notice.

### JUST PLAIN AMERICANS

The Negroes that I have met, talked to and lived among belong to every conceivable class. My Birmingham experience extended from "Bear Mash" to Tennessee Pike and from "Bear Mash" to the laborers' settlements in the Ensley coal field. The only conclusion I could read was that Negroes are just plain American citizens possessing the same voices and good points as the Americans of the ruling class. It is so patent that Negroes have learned their "way of life" by imitating white people until sometime I have wondered if they have not learned too aptly and too well.

"...he can talk their language and good naturedly mimics them."

What is this different language spoken by American Negroes? Where did they learn it? Why one would have to travel away, away back into the most isolated rural communities to discover any considerable usage of the exaggerated dialect so characteristic of the Octavius Roy Cohen stories. I strongly suspect that Mr. Cohen views his Negro characters and their dialect as the fictional creations of a professional story writer.

### DOUBTS STATEMENT

This news article quotes the judge as saying that "I have never seen or known of a Negro who was an habitual drunkard." Negroes in Birmingham and Jefferson county have either undergone a sudden reformation of miraculous proportions or they have achieved a state of perfection in deceiving the court. One is inclined to suspect the latter situation is the correct conclusion. I wish there were no habitual drunkards among Negroes, even if just in Birmingham. Then Negroes would have demonstrated a quality of self-discipline superior to a significant number of white Americans. I know that there are "oodles" of habitual white drunkards in all social classes because I have served them the spirits in exclusive and cheap clubs and exclusive and cheap bars. But I am afraid Negroes even in Birmingham, are too

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American to warrant that compliment

That type of publicity contained in this feature article does not make the task of the local Chamber of Commerce any easier to put it very mildly. Alabama needs all of the good reputation in the matter of treatment of its minority populations that it can muster.

Birmingham wants to capitalize upon its great resources and their importance to national defense. It is making armaments. It wants to make more and more. They will need large numbers of Negroes to do the hard, grueling work. But they will have to be American Negroes who speak English and are protected from a deluge of honky-tonk rockolas. Foreigners are giving America too much trouble now—the Negro described in the news article is a "foreigner" out of "Nowhere."